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MAXIMILIAN AND HIS MEXICAN EMPIRE.

By JOHN W. FOSTER.

(Read before the Society, November 15, 1910.)

The history of nations has few more romantic chapters, certainly none in the last century, than that which records the adventures of the Arch-Duke Maximilian in Mexico. A generation has passed since he ended his hapless career. In these years stirring events have transpired. Louis Napoleon, the man who originated the scheme which lured the Arch-Duke to resign his imperial succession and accept the shadow of a sceptre in Mexico, has fallen from his high estate and passed away. The English rulers who then saw in their imagination the dissolution of the great American Republic, understand better today their relations to this hemisphere. Prim and Bazaine, Juarez and Seward have passed from the stage. Of the chief actors of that day there scarcely remain any. Yes, there still linger the two dethroned empresses,—the one to weep at the tomb of the Emperor and of her luckless son, cut off in his early manhood,—the other, with shattered brain, still living in golden dreams of the Mexican Empire, and refusing to put on the widow's weeds, in daily expectation of the arrival at her Belgian palace of her Emperor husband.

It would seem that we had reached a period when a more dispassionate estimate may be formed of Maximilian's undertaking, and with this object, it is my purpose tonight to recall some of the leading events of that time and country. The French intervention in Mexico was preceded by an internal war of three years' duration between the two contending parties in Mexican polities.

This contest is styled the “War of Reform,” because of the radical change which it brought about in the government of that country. At the time of the independence from Spain and the adoption of the first constitution, the Roman Catholic was declared the state religion, and none other was tolerated. In process of time a liberal party began to be formed which advocated the complete separation of the church and state, and this gave rise to the “War of Reform,” in which Miramon and Juarez were the contending leaders, the latter being of pure Indian origin, and one of the most remarkable men this hemisphere has produced.

After varying fortunes, the Liberal party under Juarez was finally completely successful in 1860; and Miramon, Almonte (his leading statesman) and the Archbishop of Mexico abandoned the country and took refuge in Europe. These refugees carried their cause to the French Emperor and the Pope, and the Court of Napoleon became the centre of the intrigues which brought about the tripartite convention of London of October 1861. This was an agreement for an armed intervention between France, England and Spain ostensibly to enforce certain claims of, and afford protection to their respective subjects in Mexico, on the pretext that the country had fallen into anarchy.

Viewed from any standpoint,—of international usage, of good policy, or of justice,—this act was wholly unjustifiable. It was no new event even in the history of European nations, for a government to be surrounded by such embarrassments as to be compelled to temporarily suspend the payment of interest on its foreign debts, nor had it been the practice of the nations in question to follow up by armed intervention the suspended debts of their respective subjects. On the other hand, if it could be conceded that governments have the obligation or the right to enforce order and stable rule in a country sepa-

rated from them by a wide ocean, it was unreasonable to require Juarez within a few months after the close of a long civil war to consolidate his government under the penalty of inflicting upon his people a foreign peacemaker. Only a short time ago a leading London journal, in referring to these events, said that men only look back upon them with amazement and derision; and that it seemed incredible that England could ever for a moment have been committed to the tripartite convention. No; we must look elsewhere than to the acts of Juarez and his government for the true explanation of this outrage upon international rights and justice.

From the beginning of the Mexican war of independence there had existed in that country a monarchial party. It had always been in the minority and had generally been composed of malcontents. But it also embraced a considerable portion of the higher clergy and landed proprietors, who remembered the (to them) golden days of Spanish rule with its class privileges, and who looked upon the liberal tendencies of the Republican party with suspicion and dread. It is true that the transient empire of Iturbide was scarcely less than a ridiculous farce, established through perjury and hypocrisy, and that its brief existence was an evidence that the great body of the Mexicans were thorough Republicans; still its existence was an indication of a certain monarchial sentiment. As early as 1840 Gutierrez Estrada, a well-known Mexican statesman, prominent afterwards in securing the acceptance of the crown by Maximilian, proclaimed at home and in Europe the incapacity of the Mexicans for self-government, and the desirability of establishing a monarchy and placing a European prince on the throne; and in 1854 Santa Anna authorized such a project, and at various other times it had been proposed to the Spanish and French governments by disappointed and exiled Mexicans.

After the overthrow of the Church party in 1860 a concerted movement was made to carry out this long projected measure. The Archbishop of Mexico had been banished; Miramon had fled to Spain, and was received with much consideration at the Court of Queen Isabella; and Almonte, one of the ablest and most experienced of the conservative politicians, was in Paris. These and a number of other Mexican refugees, having been foiled in the arena of politics and defeated on the field of battle, had appealed the question of Mexican government and independence to the courts of European sovereigns. They proclaimed everywhere the incapacity of their countrymen for self-government; they narrated with holy horror the sacrilegious confiscation of the property of the Church, and the outrages suffered by the clergy; they exaggerated the disorders and lawlessness; and, to fill the cup of their country's iniquities and calamities, they cited the fact that a pure Indian had usurped the government of a people once ruled by the proud Castilians.

These refugees appeared at a time when it well suited the purposes of Louis Napoleon to listen to their story. His empire was at the height of its power and prestige, and after the happy results of his Italian campaign, he was looking for some field in which to employ a part of his large army and keep the attention of the French people diverted from internal politics to military adventure abroad. Hence his scheme for a Latin Empire on the American continent, which was to be a bulwark of the Faith, and a check to the spirit of American republicanism.

The diplomatic history of this intervention is a long and interesting one, but in brief can be summed up as follows: France, or rather Napoleon, had conceived the idea of taking advantage of the civil war in the United States and the disorders in Mexico to establish a monarchy

in the latter country with a prince on the throne selected by him, subservient to French political and commercial interests. Spain became apprised of his intentions, and still cherishing a hope, if not of recovering her rule, at least of securing the throne for a Spanish prince, hurried off instructions to the Captain General at Havana to hasten forward the preparations for an expedition to Mexico, and at the same time approached Napoleon with an offer of joint action. The project was one in which England had no heart, but the spirit of commercial greed which has too often influenced her war-like adventures, led her statesmen to believe that she ought not to allow France and Spain to monopolize the commercial benefits which might result from such an enterprise.

Neither is it to be forgotten that this armed intervention was conceived and undertaken at a time when the United States was rent in twain by the greatest civil war of modern times and its power abroad almost paralyzed. This was the nation which had lighted the torch of democratic revolution and set in motion the spirit which had spread throughout the two continents of America, had twice overturned the monarchy in France, had awakened the sleeping energies of the British middle classes to demand free participation in the government, and had even penetrated the darkness and stupor of Spanish politics and at times stirred the Peninsula to the very foundations of its social life. This young giant, which by its example had done so much to shake the foundations of European thrones, and had stood as the jealous guardian of American independence from European interference, seemed in the eyes of the ruling statesmen of France, England and Spain to be threatened with self-destruction, and certainly in no condition to put in practice its much vaunted "Monroe doctrine;" and hence their greater readiness to smother the Mexican Republic and es-

tablish in its stead a monarchy which would act as a check to the dangerous power of the American Union.

But the triple alliance was of short duration. England and Spain soon penetrated the ambitious designs of Napoleon and withdrew from the compact. Their military expeditions were recalled, and France was left alone to carry out the designs of her Emperor. Treating the Mexican troops with disdain, the French army advanced from the sea-coast to the interior, expecting an easy march to the Capital, but at Puebla in 1862 it assaulted the Mexican army in intrenched position and the veterans of the Crimean and the Italian campaigns were overwhelmingly defeated and driven back towards the coast. It required nearly a whole year to recover from this reverse, but in 1863 the largest and best equipped army ever seen in Mexico again moved forward towards the Capital, and it was manifest that the Mexicans would not again be able to offer any successful resistance.

It was a dark era for the Liberal party of Mexico, wearied by the long and terrible War of Reform from which they had just emerged. They had fondly hoped for a period of peace in which to establish the principles of the new Constitution and recover their wasted energies; but, in place of this, they were confronted with one of the most warlike and powerful nations of the earth, bent upon the destruction of their liberties.

The Republican army a second time made a stand at Puebla, but was overpowered, and the way to the City of Mexico now lay open to the invaders. Congress, in view of the prospective trial upon which the country was entering, conferred upon the President the extraordinary war faculties contemplated by the Constitution, and then adjourned, never again to re-assemble, until four years later, when the last foreign foe had been driven

from Mexican soil. The President and his Ministers withdrew from the Capital and established the seat of government at San Luis Potosi.

The French army, on its entrance into the city, was received with great demonstrations by the clergy and the reactionary party, but with sullen scorn by the masses of the people.

And now commenced the dénouement of the farce styled the Mexican Empire. Napoleon had already fixed upon the Arch-Duke Maximilian of Austria as the new Emperor. General Forey called together a body of Mexicans selected by him or under his direction from the clerical and monarchial ranks, and styled them "The Junta of Notables." These so-called representatives of the people proceeded to pass a decree declaring (1) that the Mexican nation adopted the monarchial form of government; (2) that the sovereign should bear the title of Emperor; (3) that the crown should be offered to Maximilian; and (4) that if he should not accept it, the Emperor Napoleon was to select some other Catholic prince. A delegation was nominated to proceed to the Castle of Miramar and offer the crown to Maximilian. Meanwhile a regency, designated by the French General through the Junta of Notables, was entrusted with the civil administration, composed of the Archbishop, Almonte and Salas.

If I may be permitted to anticipate events somewhat, I can best illustrate how the Mexican people *chose* Maximilian their Emperor and its ulterior effect on the "Notables" who took part in it, by narrating the experience of one of its members, as related by himself. Don Augustin —, an *haciendado*, was the son of a prominent Mexican of the early days of the Republic, a devout churchman, a worthy citizen, and, though a decided opponent of the Liberal party, he sought to keep aloof from pol-

itics. One day he was surprised by an invitation to call on General Forey. He responded to the invitation and was told that he had been made a member of the Junta of Notables, and it was desired that he would sign the petition to Maximilian to accept the crown. Don Augustin asked to be excused. The French General said he would give him a few days to think about it. He was called again before the general and asked his decision. He said he still desired to be excused, and when urged, gave as a reason that he owned estates in the country which would be laid waste by the Liberals and confiscated if the movement failed. Forey told him it was the wish of his Emperor (Napoleon) and that he *must* sign the petition. Don Augustin declined. He was then shown into a room in the palace where there were two or three other recusant Notables, and told that he would be kept a prisoner there a reasonable time, when, if he still refused, he would be sent to Martinique, Cayenne or other convict colony, as the Emperor could not be trifled with in that way in his efforts to regenerate the country. Don Augustin concluded that there was nothing to be done but join in the petition, so he signed. Maximilian came, was received with a "great flourish of trumpets," and the petition of the Notables was published as evidence of the spontaneous choice of the Mexican nation. The Liberals saw Don Augustin's name on the petition, and as soon as they had an opportunity they made a raid upon his hacienda or plantation, carried off all his stock and valuable effects, burned his houses and improvements and left his estate in ruins. Maximilian promised to re-imburse him, but never had the money to spare. The Empire fell. Juarez returned to the capital. Poor Augustin was imprisoned for six months to "white-wash" his loyalty and had to pay a fine of \$12,000 for his "treason"!

By such artifices as these it was sought to convince the world that the Mexican people had of their own free will changed their form of government, and under cover of such pretenses Maximilian came to Mexico and ascended the throne erected and supported by French bayonets.

In that very interesting publication *The Letters of John Lothrop Motley*, there are frequent references to Maximilian while Motley was Minister at Vienna. They are valuable as showing what a clear insight he had into the visionary scheme. On September 22, 1863 he writes:

“Here in this Capital the great interest is about the new Mexican Empire. It is I believe unquestionable that the Arch-Duke is most desirous to go forth on the adventure. It is equally certain that the step is exceedingly unpopular in Austria. The deputation of the so-called notables is expected here this week, and then the conditions will be laid down on which Maximilian will consent to live in the bed of roses of Montezuma and Iturbide. . . . The matter is a very serious and menacing one to us” (the United States).

And on the same day he writes in a humorous vein to Dr. Holmes:

“Here about Vienna the trees have been almost stripped of foliage since the end of August. There is no glory in the grass nor verdure in anything. In fact we have nothing green here but the Arch-Duke Maximilian, who firmly believes that he is going forth to Mexico to establish an American empire, and that it is his divine mission to destroy the dragon of democracy and re-establish the true church, the Right Divine, and all sorts of games. Poor young man!” (Motley’s *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 143.)

In his instructions to General Forey, Napoleon directed that the question of the form of government should be submitted to a vote of the people; and Maximilian in receiving the deputation of Notables at Mir-

amar accepted the crown upon the express condition that their action should be ratified "by the universal vote of the nation." But no such vote was ever taken, and Maximilian finally received the triumphant march of the solid French columns through the central States as the acceptance by the people of the empire, and came to Mexico, entering the capital in June 1864. He was received with great demonstrations of ostentatious loyalty by the clergy, the re-actionary party and the French army; but with no outbursts of enthusiasm on the part of the masses of the people. He at once set up his new government and the pomp and show of a European court were sought to be introduced. It tickled the fancy of those Mexicans who belonged to the monarchial faction to become part of this parade, as members of the Emperor's household or as government officials, and to wear the decorations which his Imperial Majesty distributed with profusion. The lackeys were instructed in their new duties and efforts were industriously made to educate society and the people in regard to their changed relations; but it was awkward work, and at best was little more than a mimicry of European royalty. At the outset of his administration, Maximilian found himself confronted with a serious embarrassment. Soon after the French occupation the question arose as to what was to be done with the Church property which had been sequestered by the Juarez government, the monasteries which had been closed, and the suppressed privileges of the clergy. The Regency was ready to undo all the work which Juarez had done, and such was the general expectation. But it appeared that certain French residents had been large purchasers of the confiscated Church property; and these persons had succeeded in winning General Forey over to their protection. He induced two members of the Regency to carry out his views, but the third member, the

Archbishop, refused and strongly protested. But the French General ordered the courts to decide the question in favor of the owners of the property under the Juarez sales, and when the judges refused, he caused them to be removed and more subservient ones appointed in their places. All of the archbishops and bishops in the country united in a most bitter and vindictive protest, but to no purpose. In this state of affairs Maximilian arrived, and the question was appealed to him. But he, too, influenced by French interests, decided in favor of the purchasers and against the restoration to the Church of its sequestered estates. He even went further still and issued a decree proclaiming freedom of worship and substantially ratifying and confirming the laws of Reform. The Archbishop and clergy uttered a cry of horror, and the Pope addressed Maximilian an earnest letter beseeching him to change his course, but nothing could alter his resolution. Whereupon the clergy, following the tactics they had observed under the Republic, at once arrayed themselves in bitter hostility to the Empire, and began intriguing for its failure. Nothing could more fully prove the wisdom of the policy adopted by Juarez towards the Church than this incident in Maximilian's administration. The latter seeing the Church arraying itself against him, turned for support to the more liberal element and sought by all artifices and influences to induce members of the Liberal party to accept office, appointing to high positions all prominent persons whom he could corrupt to abandon the liberal cause. And by this course of conduct he widened still more the breach with the Church.

As stated, Juarez established the seat of his government at San Luis Potosi, on the occupation of the capital by the French in 1863, but it was not long permitted to remain there. The advance of the French army north

compelled him to abandon that city and go to Sultillo, the capital of the adjoining State. But the continued approach of the French and the constant reverses of the Republican forces drove him thence to Monterey, and finally through the long desert region to Chihuahua, the capital of the most northern State of the Republic and after a time, even there he was not permitted to remain, but pursued by French troops, he was forced to the very verge of the republic and at Paso del Norte on the Mexican side of the frontier of the United States he again set up his government in 1865, where it is said his followers were at one time reduced to twenty-two persons.

But in the midst of the misfortunes which came thick and fast upon his country he never lost heart. Full of faith in the justice of his cause and confident that the Mexican people would never accept the invader and the Empire, with patient endurance and steady purpose, he never faltered in his determination to continue to uphold the cause of his country under every trial, and through these adversities it became his lot to give the world a greater example of devotion to republican liberty than had fallen to that of any other ruler. His courage and constancy attracted the attention of America and Europe, and had a most marked effect upon both friends and foes. The latter felt that so long as Juarez remained the Empire could not have a sure foundation, and the republicans throughout the nation were inspirited to follow his example and although driven from the open field by the French armies they only fled to the mountains to gather again and be ready to strike another blow.

Maximilian, anxious to make some kind of terms with Juarez, sent him an invitation to meet him in a conference and offered him a distinguished post of honor under the Empire. Juarez answered him politely but said that, called by his oath to maintain the national

integrity, his official duties would not allow him the time for a conference; and he replied to the proposition to accept office under the Empire in these words: "It is certain, Sir, that the history of our own times records the names of great traitors, who have betrayed their oaths, their word and their promises; who have been false to their own party and principles and even to their antecedents and all that is most sacred to the man of honor; true, also, that in all these cases of treason, the traitor has been guided by the vile ambition of command and the insatiable desire of satisfying his own passions, and even his own vices; but he who at present is charged with the trust of President of the Republic, emerging as he has from the obscure masses of the people, will succumb, if in the wisdom of Providence he must succumb, fulfilling his trust to the last, responding thus to the hope of the nation over which he presides, and satisfying the inspirations of his own conscience."

Driven from one post to another, the President continued to address his countrymen, informing them of the new change of government which adversity had forced him to make, and exhorting them to continue faithful, assuring them that the hour of the Republican triumph would certainly come. From Chihuahua he spoke thus:

"That hour will come, do not doubt it, Mexicans, as it came to our fathers, the conquerors of 1821. Let us have hope, but let us hope working with the heroic resolution of Hidalgo and Zaragoza, with the activity of Morelos, and with the constancy and self denial of Guerrero, keeping alive and increasing the holy fire which must produce the conflagration that will consume the tyrants and the traitors who profane our soil."

And in the darkest hour of the struggle, when again publishing the new change of government to the extreme boundary of the country at Paso del Norte, he says:

"In this place or in whatever other part of the Republic circumstances may require the government to go, the President will always do everything that is possible to fulfil his duties with firmness and constancy, complying thus with the wishes of the Mexican people, who cease not to struggle everywhere against the invader, and who necessarily must triumph at last in defense of their independence and of their republican institutions."

The years 1864 and 1865 were dark and gloomy days for the Republicans. Almost everywhere the imperial forces were successful in the campaigns, and all the combinations of the Republicans to attack weak and exposed points were only attended by partial and transient successes. While the Republicans could not cope with their adversaries in the open field or in pitched battles, there never was a time in the days of the highest triumph of the Empire when there were not tens of thousands of Republicans under arms and commanded by responsible leaders. It is not to be denied that the state of warfare afforded an opportunity for bandits and outlaws to plunder and murder, but such acts were not countenanced by the Republican generals and cannot properly be charged against their cause.

Maximilian, however, took advantage of this condition of affairs to publish a decree announcing that the Republican armies had been driven from the field, that Juarez had abandoned the country, and that the Empire was firmly established, and that, therefore, all who after that date (October 3, 1865) were captured in arms or belonged to armed bands, should be instantly shot as outlaws. It was a most cruel and barbarous decree, based upon a false statement of facts, without justification, and executed with bloody ferocity. In the dark days of the American Revolution the British could with much more show of reason have issued such a decree,

for the Mexican forces never were so reduced as were the Americans when Washington was at Valley Forge; and the British were seeking to subdue rebel subjects, while the Mexicans were fighting for their own country against foreign invaders and to maintain a long established independent government. Yet if Maximilian's decree had been enforced merely against gurerillas there might still be some justification for it; but it was applied to the regularly organized forces of the Republican army, and hundreds and thousands of Mexican soldiers were shot down after capture as outlaws, among them some of the best officers and noblest patriots in the Republican service. The decree was so revolting to humanity that the American representative at Paris was instructed to remonstrate with Napoleon's Minister of State in regard to it, and it was made to react at last upon its author with terrible effect.

But the better day for the Republic, which Juarez had predicted with so much persistency and confidence, began to dawn upon the defeated but not disheartened liberals. 1866, the fifth year of the war, opened with a decidedly improved feeling for them everywhere throughout the country. It was becoming apparent that the French had done their worst and were wearying of the contest. Their victories were fruitless and the beaten Republicans only gathered again to inflict injuries upon them at every exposed point. "The myrmidons of Juarez," writes one of their generals, "are sweeping the country with a brand of blood."

Juarez began a new change in his migratory government,—not fleeing before the victorious enemy, but following up their sullen retreat, and leaving El Paso, consecutively established himself at Chihuahua and Durango, and later at Zacetecus. As his generals advanced, their armies increased in numbers and in zeal, and the

long down-cast Mexicans began to feel that their day of deliverance was drawing near.

Meanwhile Maximilian was only seeing fresh difficulties added to his already embarrassed situation. The American civil war was over and the United States began again to vindicate the principle of European non-intervention in American affairs and secured from Napoleon an agreement to withdraw the French troops from Mexico. Although this was foreseen by the outside world as a sure result of the triumph of the Union cause, it appeared to come upon Maximilian as a complete surprise. He had not believed that Napoleon could abandon and betray him. Forthwith Almonte was dispatched to Paris to prevent if possible the catastrophe, and when the danger became more imminent the Empress wife, more high-spirited and ambitious than he, undertook the double mission of winning over Napoleon and appeasing the anger of the offended Pope.

Preparing for the worst, Maximilian pushed forward the reorganization of and impressment for the native Mexican imperial corps. There was besides a formidable force of foreign levies made up of Austrian, Belgian and other mercenaries, which at one time numbered about 20,000. With these two elements united he might hope to supply in part the departure of the retiring French and make head against the growing Republican hosts, but for the fact that his treasury was empty, his outstanding engagements heavy and his expenses increasing. In his perplexity he began to repent of his treatment of the Church, and in desperation, reversing his policy, he threw himself into the arms of the Clergy, dismissing his liberal ministers and appointing conservatives in their stead, hoping thus to revive the fortunes of his drooping cause.

The 16th of September, the Mexican Independence

day, was celebrated with great pomp, the Emperor going in state to the Cathedral to hear a "Te Deum"; and on returning to the palace, in response to a congratulatory address, he replied in what would seem a mockery of the situation, felicitating the Mexicans on their national independence, and in the course of his reply said: "Notwithstanding all my difficulties, I shall not prove vacillating in my obligations; a Hapsburg never deserts an arduous post." And yet within a few weeks, we find him abandoning the capital en route for the port of Vera Cruz, fully intending to lay down his crown and leave the country forever. He seemed to be utterly broken in his hopes and in spirit.

Almonte and the Empress had failed to shake the resolution of the treacherous Napoleon; and the poor Empress, as the last remaining stay of the falling Empire, had gone to Rome to intercede with Pio Nono, but remembering how Maximilian had refused to listen to his appeal in behalf of the Mexican Church bereft of its property and its privileges, the Holy Father, to, turned a deaf ear to her cry, and that proud-spirited woman, disenchanted of all her imperial dreams and oppressed with the weight of her cares, went out from his presence a hopeless lunatic. No wonder that Maximilian wished to flee from the scene of his disappointed ambition and the wreck of his fame and fortune. He was overtaken at Orizaba by commissioners from the Capital, who insisted that he could not in honor abandon the cause or the men who had linked their fortunes with his, and who tried to convince him that there was still hope to establish the Empire. He hung between doubt and decision for some weeks, but at last returned to the Capital, announcing his determination to adhere to "the work of regeneration," as he termed it, at all hazards and to the uttermost.

The sixth and last year of the war opened gloomy enough for the Empire. It only held the four important cities—Mexico, Queretaro, Puebla and Vera Cruz with not more than one-fifth of the country. The story of that campaign is soon told. Maximilian himself, with a heroic desperation worthy of a better cause, led his army of 10,000 men against the advancing forces of the Republicans, who were now largely superior in numbers as well as spirits. He was surrounded and driven into Queretaro, and after a well sustained siege, the entire imperial army was captured. Maximilian and the two Mexican commanders of his troops, Miramon and Mehia, were arraigned before a court martial, under the provisions of a law enacted in January, 1862, before the war begun, as criminals against the independence and safety of the Republic, against the laws of nations and the public order and peace, were condemned to death, and executed in the presence of the army on the 19th of June, 1867.

Macauley referring to the execution of Charles I says: "Men who die on the scaffold for political offences almost always die well." This was eminently true of Maximilian. His whole conduct, from the time he finally decided to remain in the country and link his fortunes to the fate of the Empire, was thoroughly manly and disinterested. He had faults and weaknesses, but cowardice was not one of them. On the morning of that summer day when he stood on the brow of the Cerro de la Campana, near the scene of his capture, in the lovely valley of Queretaro, he pleasantly said to his advocate: "What a beautiful sky! It is just like this I should have wished the day of my death to be." After addressing some words of encouragement to his two generals who were to be shot at the same moment, and embracing them, his last words were: "May my blood seal up the misfortunes of my adopted country. Long live Mexico." Then with one foot forward, lifting

his eyes towards heaven, he calmly pointed to his breast, and the fatal volley was fired which sent the three prisoners into eternity together, and the curtain dropped upon the sad tragedy of the Mexican Empire.

The execution of Maximilian was received in Europe with a feeling of indignation and was generally condemned by the civilized world; but time has greatly modified that judgment. The responsibility for the act rests upon President Juarez, inspired by his Chief Minister of State, Señor Lerdo de Tejada, his successor in the presidency; but it is doubtful if, under similar circumstances, any other ruler or people would have acted differently. Legalized regicide is not an unknown event in Europe. In the case of Charles I and Louis XVI the English and the French beheaded their own hereditary sovereigns; but in the person of Maximilian the Mexicans could see only a foreign usurper, who had come to overturn their long established institutions, who had deluged the land in blood, caused them to exhaust their resources and burden the nation with an immense debt. It is a fact not generally known that after the Junta of Notables had offered him the crown, an intelligent Mexican, sent as a Commissioner by the constitutional government, waited upon Maximilian at Miramar, explained to him the whole situation, and warned him that he was not the choice of the nation and that it would not receive him.

Let us illustrate the question by the supposition that at the close of the American Civil War, after slavery had been abolished by constitutional amendment and the Southern States had accepted the results of the contest, Jefferson Davis and General Lee had gone to Europe and enlisted France, England or other powerful nations of the old world in favor of the restoration of slavery, upon a promise to establish an Empire and place a prince of the house of Bonaparte, or of Hanover on the throne; that

these nations had dispatched large armies and powerful fleets to America, kindled anew secession and rebellion, and brought upon the Union a conflict of much greater proportions than the one from which it had just emerged with exhausted resources and depreciated credit; that the President and Cabinet had been driven out of Washington and a Bonaparte prince been crowned in the capital as Emperor of the United States; that the armies of the Union had been driven from the open field and when they still sought to resist the invader in the mountains, the wilderness and the swamps, by order of the new Emperor, the officers and soldiers when captured were shot down as highwaymen and outlaws; that the lawful President and Cabinet had been driven to Pittsburg, pursued to Cincinnati, followed to Chicago, chased out of St. Paul, and only escaped the fate of the captured soldiers by taking refuge in the desert mountains of the head waters of the Missouri on the British frontier; but that after six years of terrible war, after tens of thousands of the best sons of America had been slaughtered as outlaws and the whole country laid waste, finally the day of deliverance came, and the so-called Emperor, Mr. Davis and General Lee had been captured,—what would have been their fate?

Mutatis mutandis, this was the case of the Mexican people and their President. Juarez was not blood-thirsty in his character, as his leniency to the other foreign invaders and native traitors proved. He and Senor Lerdo, as far-sighted statemen, felt that this outrage upon national sovereignty and independence should be visited with such an exemplary punishment that the event would stand in history as a lesson and a warning to all European sovereigns against interference in the affairs of the American Republics.

Sometimes the question is mooted whether the Mexicans would have regained their independence but for the active

support of the United States in requiring Napoleon to withdraw his troops, and the steadfast recognition and sympathy extended to the Republican Government. The United States did no more than duty to their own future safety and interests dictated, and if this course had a material influence in hastening the conclusion of the contest, it no more detracts from the glory due to the Mexicans than does the alliance with France lessen the honor of the Americans in achieving their independence from Great Britain in 1783.

There was only one possible contingency which could have made the Maximilian Empire a success, and that was the triumph of the Southern Confederacy and an alliance offensive and defensive between these two new governments, supported by the active sympathy of the European monarchies. But fortunately the Southern rebellion and the European intervention were disastrous failures, and the two sister republics, emerging from the terrible conflict of fire and blood, have each placed in the foundation principles of their governmental edifice a corner-stone omitted by the patriots who gained their independence and which brought untold evils upon their descendants, freedom to the slave and religious enfranchisement to the citizen.